

11 May 1977

Washington Journalism Center

17 May 1977, 1430

Secrecy of Intelligence in a Democracy

Draft Remarks

(15 min & Q & A)

Introduction

- ° Every world power discovers it lives in a fishbowl.
 - What it thinks and does is of great interest to friends and enemies alike because they cannot help but be affected.
 - The more that's known, the more secure everyone feels.
- Secrecy to any degree is suspect.
- In 18th and 19th Centuries, all nations were affected in some way by the foreign policy of Great Britain.
- Today American and Soviet foreign policy have some affect on most other countries. The national policy of great powers involves high stakes for everyone.
- There is, therefore, a natural pressure on both the U.S. and USSR to reveal their outlooks, their intentions, and their plans.
- USSR is a closed society so can rebuff that pressure.
- USA is an open society, so both internally and externally that pressure is reinforced by our own democratic principles of openness. Secrecy is an obvious contradiction of American philosophy - and yet, it exists. Is it necessary?

7

Need for Secrecy

° Some say secrecy leads to abuses. Record bears this out to some extent:

- Governments do try to keep secret mistakes, errors, differences
of opinion

Watergate

° Can be bad when it's done to cover scandal, embarrassment,
blunders - these abuses constitute a bipartisan problem/
not confined to any one administration.

° Easy to rationalize as good

- prevent undermining administration
- prevent undermining international reputation.

° However, it is a fact that government, like businesses, like people,
cannot function smoothly in a complex world unless it keeps some secrets
to itself.

- Some confidentiality has always been necessary, particularly in
defense and diplomatic affairs. No nation in history exempt. *Tiecho*
l. g.

° When nations are as closely balanced in power as the U.S.
and USSR, secrecy itself confers advantages which an extra
1,000 missiles would not provide. e.g. *codes - WW II*

° For example, we would be at a tremendous disadvantage in SALT
and MBFR talks if the Soviet Union knew how we intend to use
our strategic forces, how they are targeted, what we are
prepared to give up to get an agreement (the bottom line),
how much (or little) we know about their forces/bargaining
position/motives, etc.

-3-

° And, even when classified information becomes dated/passe', it may be important for a while to keep it secret to protect the means by which we obtained it in the first place. May be a well-placed agent whose access to Soviet secrets is so specialized that for the Soviets to know the secret is to know who revealed it. Life in danger. Source of future information jeopardized/destroyed.

- I assure you, the best means of intelligence collection, be they technical or human, are not developed overnight or at small cost. [redacted]

Balance Between Secrecy and Openness

° In a democracy there is no such thing as an absolute secret - someone always "needs to know."

William Clarke - former PR advisor to Prime Minister Anthony Eden says, Rule of Thumb: Of all those who claim a "vital necessity to know," about 1% really need to know.

- May be extreme, but nonetheless, a balance must be sought where abuses cannot be perpetuated, where vital national secrets can be protected, and where the government and the public can remain informed.

The media is not necessarily the best judge of what the public needs to know, but if overclassification is the rule, rather than the exception, and access is rampant, much classified information finds its way to the press.

balance

Places burden on you -

*of your
immediate*

*-4-
Greater good - publish anything - access*

- We can only hope the press acts responsibly with it, and I think in most cases, has.
- On the other hand, severe and irreparable damage has on occasion been done and lives lost through the premature release of national secrets in the open press.
- Your responsibility in judging what you should or should not print is indeed great. And, while I do not advocate government censorship of the press, I do expect any responsible journalist will exercise self-censorship. Will be fully informed of the facts and their potential ramifications before a story is printed.
- ° In my opinion, two of the major factors influencing a government's *your decisions* policy regarding secrecy vs openness:
 - The moral authority of the government at the time.
 - ° e.g. the attitude of the public regarding Vietnam increased government secrecy; the perceived immorality of the government's involvement there, certainly led to the Pentagon Papers leak.
 - ° Although there was great secrecy in government during World War II the government was viewed by the general public as essentially moral and leaks were very rare.
 - The internal nature *could be masked* of power.
 - ° When wars could be limited and "managed" secrecy prevailed
 - ° In nuclear age, nuclear war is unmanageable, therefore, powers must "signal" each other by disclosing what otherwise would be considered secrets.

-5-

- ° So we have a continually shifting balance depending on the times and the public perception of the government.

CIA Initiatives

- ° At all times, an intelligence organization is the most difficult to open up
- ° We are taking some positive steps to do so however:
 - Release more to general public
 - ° u/c publications
 - ° open Agency to visitors (limited basis)
 - ° dispell myths and refute untruth at every opportunity
 - Attacking classification problem in two ways:
 - ° classify less
 - declassify more/more quickly
 - ° protect better that which is truly sensitive
 - less access
 - tighter compartmentation

Difficult boundary line - daily decisions